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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 AID-05 HA-05
MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 COME-00
LAB-04 SIL-01 /093 W

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R 052122Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5620

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: RADICAL PARTY MOVING INTO OPPOSITION?

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 3328; (B) BUENOS AIRES 3176

SUMMARY. THE RECENT ARREST OF RADICAL PARTY LEADER BALBIN AND THE HARASSMENT OF RADICAL PARTY MEMBERS BY THE SECURITY FORCES REFLECT GOVERNMENT AWARENESS THAT THE OLD POLITICAL JUICES ARE BEGINNING TO FLOW AGAIN. BALBIN'S STRATEGY REPORTEDLY IS TO PRESSURE THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL NORMALIZATION. A RADICAL SOURCE CLOSE TO BALBIN APPEARS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR GREATER POLITICAL FREEDOM IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND CLAIMS THE PARTY WILL MOVE INTO OPPOSITION AGAINST THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT IF VIDELA DOESN'T SHOW GREATER FLEXIBILITY. MEANWHILE, THERE ARE REPORTS THAT BALBIN WAS TREATED DISCOURTEOUSLY BY POLICE DURING A RECENT INCIDENT IN THE INTERIOR OF THE COUNTRY AND HE IS RESPONDING WITH SOME DEGREE OF DEFIANCE. HE IS ALSO MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH RIVALS OF VIDELA IN THE MILITARY, WHICH MAY BE THE SOURCE

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(☒) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part (☒) In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

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OF SOME OF HIS PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY

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1. NOW THAT THEY HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEBRIEF RADICAL PARTY (UCRP) HEAD, DR. RICARDO BALBIN (WHO RETURNED TO BUENOS AIRES MAY 2), OUR UCRP SOURCES HAVE RETREATED SOMEWHAT FROM THEIR EARLIER HYPOTHESIS AS TO WHO IS TO BLAME FOR BALBIN'S EIGHT-AND-A-HALF HOUR LONG ARREST IN SAN LUIS PROVINCE. BALBIN PLACES THE BLAME ON THE LOCAL POLICE CHIEF AS WELL AS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR (WHOSE FATHER IS AN OLD POLITICAL ADVERSARY), BUT RADICAL LEADERS CONTINUE ASSERTING TO US THAT THESE AUTHORITIES WOULD NOT HAVE DARED TO TREAT BALBIN SO IGNOMINIOUSLY HAD THEY NOT PREVIOUSLY CONSULTED

HIGHER AUTHORITY IN BUENOS AIRES (READ INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY). THE RADICALS SEE HARGUINDEGUY'S TOUGH LINE AGAINST POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITY AS SETTING THE FRAMEWORK FOR POLICE ACTIONS SUCH AS THE SAN LUIS INCIDENT -- SO THAT IN THEIR EYES HARGUINDEGUY IS THE ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE PARTY. BALBIN HAS BEEN REACTING TESTILY SINCE THIS INCIDENT, MAINTAINING THAT HE AND HIS COMPANIONS MERELY HAD BEEN "KILLING TIME" UNTIL TRAIN-TIME AT A PROVINCIAL HOTEL WHEN THEY WERE WRONGFULLY DETAINED BY AN "AGGRESSIVE POLICE CHIEF."

2. BALBIN APPEARED BEFORE A FEDERAL JUDGE MAY 4 TO MAKE A STATEMENT CONCERNING THE UCRP MEETING WHICH TOOK PLACE IN HIS LAW OFFICE ON APRIL 22, AT WHICH TIME A WRITTEN PARTY CRITIQUE OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SCENE WAS MADE PUBLIC -- THE INCIDENT WHICH LED TO EX-

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VICE PRESIDENT PERETTE AND EX FEDERAL DEPUTY TROCCOLI'S BEING CALLED IN FOR QUESTIONING THE FOLLOWING DAY (REFTEL B). HOWEVER, WHEN THE JUDGE BEGAN TO CROSS EXAMINE BALBIN TO DETERMINE WHETHER THAT INCIDENT CONSTITUTED A VIOLATION OF LAW 21,323 (WHICH PROHIBITS POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITIES), BALBIN STOOD ON HIS CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO REFUSE TO TESTIFY AND WITHDREW FROM THE COURTHOUSE.

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3. IN THE PAST FEW DAYS THE NEWS MEDIA HAVE BEEN GIVING CONSIDERABLE PLAY TO RECENT RADICAL PARTY ACTIVITIES -- MOST OF THEM (PERHAPS TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE A REFLECTION OF THE CURRENT ESTABLISHED ORDER) CAST IN A NEGATIVE LIGHT. IN AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "RADICAL DISOBEDIENCE," SOMOS MAGAZINE DESCRIBED THE APRIL 22 MEETING AS "A CONVENTION -- THE FIRST ORGANIZED POLITICAL MANIFESTATION PRODUCED IN OUR COUNTRY SINCE MARCH 24, 1976." THE DOCUMENT WHICH EMERGED FROM THAT MEETING IS DESCRIBED AS A CALL FOR THE RECOMMENCEMENT OF POLITICAL AND TRADE UNION ACTIVITY. SEVERAL JOURNALS CRITICIZE BALBIN AND HIS PARTY FOR THEIR FAILURE TO ASSESS THE UCRP'S OWN SINS OF THE RECENT PAST. GENTE MAGAZINE FEATURED A LETTER TO THE EDITOR TAKING BALBIN TO TASK FOR BEING AMBIVALENTLY SOFT WITH RESPECT TO THE ANARCHY AND TERRORISM RAMPANT UNTIL THE 1976 COUP GENTE ALSO REPRINTED A BITING CARTOON INTENDED TO REMIND THE PUBLIC THAT IT WAS BALBIN WHO, BEFORE THE COUP, RESIGNEDLY THREW UP HIS ARMS AND STATED THAT HE HAD NO SOLUTIONS

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TO THE PROBLEMS OF THAT PERIOD.

4. RADICAL PARTY SECRETARY ENRIQUE VANOLI HAS ACKNOWLEDGED TO EMBASSY THAT BALBIN'S STRATEGY IS

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TO PRESSURE THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT INTO ACCELERATING THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL NORMALIZATION THROUGH PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS, SUCH AS THE APRIL 22 MEETING AND DECLARATION, WHICH ARE INTENDED TO PUT TO A TEST VIDELA'S PROMISE OF A POLITICAL DIALOGUE ON THE ONE HAND AND THE BAN AGAINST PARTY ACTIVITY ON THE OTHER. VANOLI STATES THAT, IF WHAT VIDELA HAS UP HIS SLEEVE IS AN ARTIFICIALLY IMPOSED PRO-GOVERNMENT UNIPARTY, BALBIN AND THE UCRP WILL NEVER "COLLABORATE. SAYS VANOLI, EVEN THE RADICAL PARTY GLAMOUR BOY, EX SENATOR FERNANDO DE LA RUA, WHO UNTIL RECENTLY HAD ENTERTAINED HOPES OF BEING INVITED TO JOIN THE CABINET IN VIDELA'S SECOND TERM, HAS NOW SEEN THE LIGHT AND HAS JOINED IN SIGNING THE APRIL 22 UCRP MANIFESTO; (THE MAYOR HOLD OUT WAS CESAR GARCIA PUENTE). NOW THAT PRESIDENTIAL AIDE JOFRE, WHO WAS A MAJOR GOVERNMENT CONTACT MAN FOR THE POLITICAL PARTIES, APPEARS TO HAVE LEFT THE SCENE, VANOLI STATED THAT THERE WAS NO ONE

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IN THE GOVERNMENT WHO WAS NOW TALKING TO THE PARTIES ON A REGULAR, SYSTEM TIC BASIS. VANOLI APPEARS QUITE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR A REAL POLITICAL OPENING. HE BELIEVES THAT WHATEVER PLANS FOR AN "OPENING" YOFRE MAY HAVE HAD IN MIND HAVE NOW GONE BY THE WAYSIDE. HE FEARS THAT LAW 21,323 WILLHENCEFORTH BE RIGIDLY ENFORCED. IF INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY IS RATIFIED IN HIS JOB IN VIDELA'S SECOND CABINET ON AUGUST 1, VANOLI SAYS THAT THE RADICAL PARTY WILL "GO INTO OP-POSITION."

5. VANOLI SURPRISES US BY THE DEGREE OF HOSTILITY WHICH HE HOLDS FOR VIDELA. HE REVEALED THAT BALBIN HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH VIDELA'S HARDLINE CRITIC, FIRST ARMY COMMANDER GEN. SUAREZ MASON, WHOM VANOLI LIKES TO THINK OF AS A PARTY SYMPATHIZER. VANOLI HOLDS THAT SUAREZ MASON HAS BEEN UNJUSTLY MALIGNED ON ACCOUNT OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE FIRST CORPS AREA, WHEREAS THE REAL CULPRIT IN VANOLI'S EYES IS GEN. SANTIAGO OMAR RIVEROS (MILITARY

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INSTITUTES COMMANDER, CAMPO DE MAYO.) VANOLI ALSO REVEALED CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY FOR ADMIRAL MASSERA'S POLITICAL VIEWS, ALTHOUGH ACKNOWLEDGING THAT MASSERA IS A CRASS OPPORTUNIST WHO CANNOT BE TRUSTED.

6. VANOLI'S COMMENTS ALSO REVEAL THAT A MAJOR PLANK IN THE RADICAL PARTY PLATFORM IS A CRITICISM OF ECONOMY MINISTER MARTINEZ DE HOZ FOR HIS ALLEGED "GIVE AWAY" TO THE MULTINATIONALS, ACCOMPANIED BY A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW REGIME OF RIGID CONTROLS ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT -- SUGGESTING THAT THE RADICALS' ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY HAS NOT EVOLVED

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MUCH SINCE THE 1930S. ALL AND ALL, THE POLITICAL PULSE OF THE NATION SEEMS TO BE BEATING MORE RAPIDLY AND WE ARE BEGINNING TO GET A TASTE OF THE OLD POLITICS AGAIN. CASTRO

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